

TWO-THIRDS (63%) OF CANADIANS SAY THEY'RE LESS LIKELY TO BUY FOOD THAT IS GENETICALLY MODIFIED

***But They're Split on Whether to Embrace (45%) or Abandon
(50%) GM Technology Vis-à-vis International Trade***



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But They're Split on Whether to Embrace (45%) or Abandon (50%) GM Technology Vis-à-vis International Trade

Toronto, ON — An Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail poll released today shows that a full majority (63%) of Canadians are less likely to buy a food product that is genetically modified or contains genetically modified ingredients. Only 4 percent indicated that they are more likely to buy the food product, while 32 percent said it would make no difference to them.

From an international competitive advantage in the global economy, Canadians are split over how Canada should deal with this new technology. While 45 percent indicate that we should embrace this technology because it is the way of the future and it will give us a competitive advantage in the global economy, another 50 percent indicated that Canada should stay away from this technology because it will be shunned by some countries and it could hurt our international trade.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Globe and Mail poll conducted between August 21 and August 23, 2001. The poll is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,000 adult Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 1996 Census data.

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The poll is released on the heels of a report issued by the federally commissioned Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee which was released on August 23, 2001. The report called for, among other things, the nomination of a chief food-safety officer to monitor the impact of genetically modified foods and advocated a gradual and voluntary approach to the labeling of foods that contain genetically modified products, instead of calling for a mandatory system. The report also criticized a “perception of mandate conflict” in the federal government, which both tests genetically modified foods and promotes new Canadian genetically modified products abroad.

Two-Thirds (63%) of Canadians are Less Likely To Purchase Food That is Genetically Modified or Contains Genetically Modified Ingredients — for 32%, it Makes No Difference

Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents indicated that if they were food shopping in a grocery store and the food they were considering purchasing was genetically modified or contained genetically modified ingredients they would be somewhat (21%) or much (41%) less likely to buy the product. Respondents from BC (73%), Ontario (65%), and Quebec (64%) were most likely to feel strongest in their view, followed by Alberta (56%), Atlantic Canada (55%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (49%). Women (64%) are only slightly less likely than men (61%) to purchase a food product in this regard. Age variations are only slight — those 35 to 54 are least likely (67%) to purchase the product followed by those aged 55+ (63%) and those 18 to 34 (59%).

A third (32%) of respondents indicated that it would make no difference to them in their purchase behaviour — with 47 percent indicating this in Saskatchewan and Manitoba followed by Alberta (41%), Atlantic Canada (38%), Quebec (32%), Ontario (28%), and BC (24%).

Only 4 percent of respondents indicated that they would be more likely to purchase a GM food with highest levels attained in Ontario (6%) and Atlantic Canada (6%).

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While Canadians to a majority are wary of foods that contain genetically modified ingredients, they are less certain as to whether or not we should embrace or abandon this technology given the global economy and international trade.

Forty-five percent (45%) indicated that Canada should embrace GM technology because it is “the way of the future and it will give us a competitive advantage in the global economy”. Those most likely to agree with this statement included those from Saskatchewan and Manitoba (50%), Alberta (49%), Ontario (46%) and Atlantic Canada (46%). Also, those aged 18 to 34 years (50%) and men (48%) were most likely to agree with this statement.

Of the 50 percent who indicated that Canada should stay away from this technology “because it will be shunned by some countries and could hurt our international trade”, they were most prominent in BC (58%) and Quebec (52%), older (35+, 51%) and more likely to be women (54%).



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